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MEDICARE SURVEY FINDS OVERALL SATISFACTION IN CONTRACTOR-PROVIDER RELATIONSHIP

The vast majority of Medicare health care providers are satisfied with the customer service, claims processing and educational activities provided by the Medicare fee-for-service contractors, according to a new survey conducted by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).

The first Medicare Contractor Provider Satisfaction Survey (MCPSS) was designed to garner objective, quantifiable data on provider satisfaction with the fee-for-service (FFS) contractors that process and pay Medicare claims. The MCPSS revealed that 85 percent of respondents rated their contractors between 4 and 6 on a 6-point scale.

The survey was sent early this year to more than 25,000 randomly selected providers, including physicians, suppliers, health care practitioners and institutional facilities that serve Medicare beneficiaries across the country. MCPSS will be administered on an annual basis to measure satisfaction with key services performed by the 42 FFS contractors that process and pay more than \$280 billion in Medicare claims each year.

“Our partnerships with physicians and hospitals – the full scope of health providers – is so important that we are measuring their satisfaction with contractors’ service levels and hold the contractors to high performance standards,” said CMS Administrator Mark B. McClellan, M.D., Ph.D. “The new survey aids us in working with Medicare contractors which, in turn, will help us be more effective in dealing with our providers nationwide.”

The survey focused on the seven business functions of the provider-contractor relationship -- provider communications, provider inquiries, claims processing, appeals, provider enrollment, medical review, and provider audit and reimbursement. Respondents were asked to rate their contractors using a scale of 1 to 6 on each of the business functions, with “1” representing “not at all satisfied” and “6” representing “completely satisfied.”

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For all contractor types, key predictors for satisfaction were the handling of provider questions and claims processing. The specific composite scores by contractor type are:

- Regional home health intermediaries received an average score of 4.79
- Part A fiscal intermediaries received 4.71
- Part B carriers received 4.52
- Durable medical equipment regional carriers received 4.43

Among those who interact with fiscal intermediary contractors, the most satisfied providers are rural health centers and skilled nursing facilities, both with 4.73, followed by end-stage renal disease treatment facilities with 4.59, and hospitals with 4.57.

For those interacting with carrier contractors, the most satisfied providers are ambulance (4.66) and physicians (4.61), followed by labs (4.50) and licensed practitioners (4.40).

“Provider feedback is a critical component of the evaluation and enhancement process in our effort to get the best possible contractor performance,” Dr. McClellan said. “These results from our first-year survey will set the baseline so we may identify trends and address issues in the future. The survey enables CMS to make valid comparisons of provider satisfaction between contractors and, over time, improvements to the Medicare program.”

In January, the 2007 MCPSS will be distributed to a new sample of Medicare providers. The views of each provider in the survey are important because they represent many other organizations similar in size, practice type and geographical location.

The MCPSS is one of the tools CMS will use to measure provider satisfaction levels, as a result of the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003. It was developed with extensive input from providers, and information about the survey has been disseminated to providers through a variety of channels, including Open Door Forum conference calls with providers, and Medlearn Matters articles posted on the CMS Web site. CMS will conduct ongoing outreach to providers throughout the survey process.

Further information about the MCPSS is available at: <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MCPSS/>

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